

Social Questions

BULLETIN

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of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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REVOLUTION BY CONSENT

By WILLIAM B. SPOFFORD*

On a summer day in 1937 I met, with other Americans, with Mr. Lloyd George. He told us, as other leaders did in the seven countries we visited, that another World War was inevitable. But this venerable man did a thing that none of the others had dared do—he made a prophecy. “The line-up for this war,” declared Lloyd George, “will be Britain, France and the United States against Germany, Italy and Japan. The Soviet Union will join one side or the other. The side on which the Soviet Union fights will win the war.”

Having been in the Soviet Union that summer I believed that statement to be true then and I have believed it ever since, even in the dark days when the Nazi hordes were at the gates of Moscow or when the Nazi high command was expected hourly to announce triumphantly the fall of Stalingrad. The basis of this confidence was socialism; even in short visits to four Soviet cities, a few collective farms and factories, I could see that it made a nation and its people strong and determined and believing.

For a clergyman to declare his belief in socialism—certainly if he works at it—inevitably lays him open to the charge of being “secular”. The reverse is the truth for our day; not to believe in socialism is to be “secular”. We affirm our belief in God; a perfectly meaningless affirmation unless we believe that He is a purposeful Being. Further, we believe that His purpose has been revealed to men, and supremely in the action and teaching of Jesus the Christ if we accept the Christian faith. He declared it to be God’s purpose to establish here on earth the Kingdom of God. And he gave that concept content by insisting that a number of principles were fundamental: the worth of every human being; the right of all to an abundant life; a world in which all men, everywhere, should live as brothers.

All of which is trite and commonplace through much repeating, yet the fact remains that these principles have not been accepted by society, nor have they been accepted for the most part by those who profess to be Christians. Instead of recognizing the worth of all men and their right to an abundant life, we have an economy based upon the exploitation of man by man, resulting in extremes of wealth and poverty. And because we do, inevitably we have not brotherhood but war.

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CAPITALISM AND ITS BREAKDOWN

What has happened and is happening in our world should be clear since it has happened in the life-time of many of us, and has been pointed out to us by innumerable writers and speakers. We witnessed during the last century the expansion of western civilization. Populations increased; there was great scientific development and the expansion of the techniques for production. Living standards were raised, with improvements in health, education, culture. Wealth piled up, colonies were developed, world trade expanded. At the turn of the century western civilization stood astride the world. Capitalism had created a society which apparently was giving the world abundance and had succeeded in solving that century-old problem of how to create enough to satisfy human needs.

But the flood tide of capitalist expansion eventually had to yield to the ebb tide of contraction. The system required ever greater markets in which to dispose of the so-called surplus—and surplus for any capitalist nation means the goods we cannot allow our own people to consume without destroying the system. Nations which were once lucrative markets for our surplus goods were gradually lost as these nations created their own industrial civilizations. We soon discovered that there is not room in this finite world for several expanding centers of national profit-taking systems.

So we began to grab markets—all done because of the sheer necessity, if the system was to be maintained, of disposing of the wealth we would not allow our own people to have, no matter how great their need. Not finding the markets, or enough markets, we filled our warehouses with the goods—anything rather than allow them to be consumed. Eventually of course we had to decrease production. Workers were laid off, thus decreasing even limited home consumption. Then we began to use the word “crisis”. Workers were idle not occasionally but constantly. Idle investments piled up. Colonial peoples became restive. The capitalist nations, having grabbed all available undeveloped territories, began to grab from each other.

In this crisis, at the beginning of our century, a people’s movement began to develop, with the demand that the system which gave them misery and war should be scrapped and for it substituted a system whereby the machines, the raw materials and man’s willingness to work could be combined to give to people security and peace.

The issue was joined in 1914. Rival capitalisms

plunged into a war of rival imperialisms. Out of it came the slogan: "Turn the imperialist war into civil war". Increased numbers of people saw that capitalism gave not a decent life to them but profits to the few. They saw that those who work are not allowed to buy. Further, they saw that all this was not due to the "sinfulness" or "wickedness" of individuals but rather because even good men cannot make a bad system work. Distribution was ordered wrongly, with unemployment and its attendant miseries, and eventually war, the inevitable results.

In one vast area of this earth the system was overthrown and a socialist economy established. There were similar economic revolutions elsewhere—in Germany, in France, in Italy—with militant talk, at least, in England. Some of these doubtless would have been successful had it not been for American billions which were loaned—*given* as it eventually turned out—to bolster not only the tottering capitalisms of Europe but our own as well. Thus was the initiative of the Peoples Revolution in Europe lost—crushed by armies, by police, but more particularly by the granting of huge credits through the Young Plan and the Dawes Plan, all done to maintain capitalism and those whose privilege and power rested upon it.

Fascism was not long in coming on the stage. It is defined by Scott Nearing as "historically a stage in the decline of the profit economy from the high point of finance imperialism to a self-sufficient national economy". It is an organized retreat to a lower level of life, with a consolidation of power and wealth for the few at the expense of the masses of people who are virtually enslaved. That too is Scott Nearing but I omit the quotes since I do not have his actual statement before me. No longer any pretense of democracy which too often is a luxury allowed so long as capitalism feels secure.

OUR WAR ECONOMY

Here in the United States it was a time of comparative quiet as we sought the solution of our problems by the creation of a social service state. Various agencies of government were created to subsidize the masses in their poverty and to create an artificial scarcity to the end of maintaining the system. The failure of the social service state brought forth a war economy, described once by Reinhold Niebuhr as "building armaments on borrowed money in order to solve our problem of unemployment". In the light of subsequent events many of us are glad that we went into a war economy. But in economic terms it is not to be explained by external threats solely but even more by internal necessity. It was W.P.A. in reverse—this time not millions for pitiful doles to keep the masses alive, but billions to the industrialists to boom their factories. And almost overnight they stopped demanding that a ceiling must be put on the federal debt—the sky was the limit so long as it passed through their hands. Likewise, almost overnight, they stopped calling workers "bums who wouldn't work if given a chance", and began making newspapers prosperous by running large advertisements begging the "bums" to please take their places at the machines. Strange, isn't it, how short is the memory of man?

THE MOSCOW DECLARATIONS

So eventually to war and our present moment. We are out to lick Fascism, a very essential task, which is being carried on with a marked degree of success. And a success not alone in the military sphere but in the political as well. Certainly we must be greatly encouraged by the recent Moscow Declarations. Mr. Max Lerner has called the Moscow meeting "Munich in reverse". On that historic occasion in 1938 the leaders of the democracies cowed before the nazi-fascist gangsters while the people, with notable exceptions, were indifferent. To stand for a united front against fascism in those days was to be dubbed a dangerous "red", with an investigation by the Dies Committee likely. It was during that week of Munich that a great mass meeting was held in Madison Square Garden. In the absence of Dr. Harry F. Ward from the city I was asked to speak briefly in his stead as an officer of the now non-existent American League for Peace and Democracy. I ended that speech by saying: "We must stand by China, and Spain, and Czecho-Slovakia and whatever nations are next on the list of fascist aggressors. We must demand of our governments foreign policies that will distinguish between the aggressors and their victims; we must demand of our governments concerted action to quarantine Hitler, Mussolini and the war lords of Japan. It is only thus that the democratic peoples of the world can achieve that peace they so fervently desire. It is only thus that we, along with Britain and France, can avoid being added eventually to the list of victims". This I repeat, in spite of the risk of being called an "I-told-you-so-guy", because it does seem to me, after the slaughter of millions of youth and the destruction of billions in property, that the decent people of this world now hold the position a tiny minority—and a persecuted minority—held at the time of Munich. Today, at long last, there is a united front *against* fascism and *for* peace and democracy, and behind it, miracle of miracles, is a considerable body of respectable, organized religious opinion.

FASCISM WITHIN

But there is danger in being too optimistic over the Moscow Declarations. In the process of crushing fascism we will do well not to confine ourselves solely to the Axis powers. We have our own brand—those Americans who were described to me the other day by a young student as "people with red, white and blue eyes but swastika hearts." There are two struggles going on today. One is the struggle between the United Nations and the Axis powers. It is easy for us to know where we line up in this fight.

There is also a world-wide struggle between those who believe that machine technique and our ability to produce shall unite the nations in a cooperative society that will eventually end poverty, classes and war, and those who are determined to maintain privilege and power even if it means slavery, the scrapping of democracy, fascism and a third world war. This struggle is on in our generation. And as I read and meet people I find them, in the last analysis, orientated toward either Berlin or Moscow. Those who want men, machines and materials used to produce goods for human needs look to Moscow as standing for this supremely. Others, while pretending to

support the war effort, actually are ready to sabotage it for fear that the complete crushing of Hitler and his world will bring to the end the exploitation of man by man, and so the end of their privilege and power. It is these that talk of the "Godless Russians", or did until the Kremlin smashed that argument by recognizing the Holy Orthodox Church; they are those who promote anti-Semitism; who say that labor must be conscripted in order to win the war but in the same breath say that no ceiling must be put on profits lest free enterprise be destroyed. That struggle is basic and no matter how grateful we are to Mr. Hull and Mr. Eden for going to Moscow and giving us the Declarations, we do well to keep our eye on that struggle. For we still have Spain and Franco; Vichy and appeasement; Italy and Badoglio; AMG and collaboration with American business men moving in with bread and bullets. For what? In order that peoples may determine their own destinies as the Moscow Declarations affirm? Let us hope so and demand so. But do not for one moment forget that there are powerful interests at home and abroad who will do all in their power to smash the united front of the Big Four, in order that we may move in as the servant of finance imperialism.

The other evening I had dinner with a representative of finance capitalism. He began by saying that he was amused at all this talk among church folks—just and durable peace and others—about the coming peace conference. "There won't be any. What we need is a standing army of eight or ten million men. Keep 'em busy doing policing jobs. How else can we take care of the unemployed? Then we need to prepare for the third world war right now. Hand out big defense contracts. Sure it will mean more borrowed money and a lot of it, but what of it? It will keep us prosperous. High taxes, sure—but what of that so long as profits can be made and high salaries paid? And don't think labor won't go along—lots of work at high wages will hold them in line, even if they can't buy much with their money. They think they are prosperous so long as they have money in their pockets." That was one man's scheme, and I had a feeling he was speaking for a lot of others.

People won't stand for it you say? I am not so sure. As Father Edward Dowling of Fordham University said not so long ago: "The two biggest obstacles to democracy in the United States are, first, the widespread delusion among the poor that we have a democracy, and second, the chronic terror among the rich lest we get it." That is a combination hard to beat.

THE CHRISTIAN'S ROLE

There is but one role for an American and a Christian to play in this struggle. We still have democracy—at least political democracy. It is a technique for peaceful, orderly change. We must use it for revolution by consent. If not, then the forces at work in this world will lead to revolution through violence.

The best way to maintain democracy is to extend it into all areas of life—social, racial, industrial. Thus we can move from where we are, with machines, men and materials giving us misery and war, into an order of life where these things can give us security, abundance and peace.

It is our privilege to play our part in this historic moment and I think professed Christians have a great role to play. Because we recognize the worth of every living creature and because we believe in the common brotherhood of all men, everywhere, we must take our place on the side of the masses in the struggle to make this the People's Century.

HAVE YOU READ

"The Church After the War" by Bishop Francis J. McConnell? Published by the Joint Division of Education and Cultivation, 150 Fifth Ave., New York City. 136 pages, price 25 cents.

"Bishop McConnell sketches in his own masterly fashion the general nature of the problems that will face the Church in the post-war world. He has six chapters: Background; Strategy and Tactics; Concerning Cycles and Some Other Puzzles; Christian Democracy; Some Special Challenges; Post-War Morale and Immediate Duties."

UNIT MEETING

An all day conference was held at Poughkeepsie, New York, on October 20th, under the auspices of the New York Conference Branch of the M.F.S.S. with Dr. Harry F. Ward as the principal speaker.

C. I. O. CONVENTION

Charles C. Webber was a speaker at the National Religion and Labor Conference held in Philadelphia October 31-Nov. 2. He also attended the sessions of the National C. I. O. Convention meeting Nov. 1-5 in the same city. He reports that the C. I. O. delegates (nearly 600 from 39 National and International Unions representing 5,285,000 members) adopted the following significant resolutions of particular interest to *Social Questions Bulletin* readers:

Post-War Planning

WHEREAS, the United Nations in war are conquering tyranny abroad, the United Nations in peace must conquer unemployment and poverty.

We have demonstrated in this country during the war that we have the knowledge, the skills, the machines and resources to produce a "gold standard of living" for every American. This is the objective for which we are now fighting and which must be accomplished in the peace; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, (1) This convention commends President Murray for his foresight in establishing a CIO Post-War Planning Committee for the purpose of developing plans and guiding the organization as it confronts the problems of post-war. We commend the work of this Post-War Planning Committee and recommend that it continue in its task under the direction of the Executive Board and the President of the CIO;

(2) We must recognize that it is essential today to lay the basis for the plans for our post-war period to meet the aspirations of the people;

(3) The essentials which must be assured to everyone in the peace are:

A job at union wages, or a farm, business, or profession that pays.

A well-built convenient home decently furnished.

Good food, clothing and medical care.

Good schooling for children with an equal chance for a healthy and happy growth.

An income through social insurance in case of sickness, old age, early death of the wage earner, or unemployment.

The guarantee of the right of every worker to join a union

of his own choosing and to enjoy the benefits of collective bargaining.

(4) Victory in the peace involves the accomplishment of these ends and it is the task and responsibility of labor to see that it does not become merely a pious slogan.

Poll Tax

WHEREAS, (1) The elimination of the poll tax requirement, which in eight of our States places a price tag on the right to vote, has long been recognized as a necessary step toward the perfection of our democratic structure. In the war period it becomes more and more apparent that this step is a military necessity and that our failure to take this step is playing into the hands of our enemies;

(2) The anti-poll tax bill has passed the House of Representatives but is being held up in the Senate Judiciary Committee on the flimsy pretext of its doubtful constitutional legality; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, (1) That this convention calls upon the Senate Judiciary Committee to report out the anti-poll tax bill with a favorable recommendation;

(2) We also call upon the Senate of the United States to discharge its obligation to the people of the nation and enact forthwith this legislation eliminating the poll tax and not to permit or tolerate any unscrupulous filibuster on the part of the clique of poll tax Senators intent on preserving their personal political position with a callous disregard of the national emergency and popular will;

(3) Each delegate to this convention should immediately communicate with the members of the Senate Judiciary Committee and their Senators in Congress to obtain immediate and favorable action on the pending anti-poll tax legislation.

No-Strike Pledge

WHEREAS, (1) The working men and women of this nation desire above anything else to exert all their effort and energy toward achieving maximum production of war materials;

(2) A strike or stoppage of work must necessarily interfere with this effort for all-out production and to that extent actually assists our enemies and endangers the lives of those men and women on the battlefronts fighting the Axis armies;

(3) The CIO at the outset of this war gave its no-strike pledge which it has religiously maintained;

(4) We must recognize that the enemies of our war effort are constantly seeking to provoke labor into engaging in strikes, such as through the enactment of the Smith-Connally Act, and that there are employers who for their own personal profit may endeavor to take advantage of our war situation and attempt to exploit labor regardless of the impact of their policies upon the war effort; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, (1) That the CIO hereby reaffirms its solemn pledge without any qualifications or conditions that for the duration of the war there must not

be any strike or stoppage of work. Each member and each leader of organized labor must make it his responsibility to discharge with scrupulous care this sacred obligation. Any leader of organized labor who deliberately flouts this obligation and any employer who seeks to provoke or exploit labor are playing into the hands of the enemies of our nation;

(2) We must recognize that for the duration of the war, issues in dispute between labor and management must be adjusted through the peaceful means of collective bargaining, mediation, or through disposition by the National War Labor Board;

(3) Further, we must recognize that to assure the prosecution of a war program that will prevent special groups from exploiting labor or benefiting from the sacrifices of others, organized labor has the task of mobilizing the people on the legislative and political fronts behind a win-the-war program designed to meet the basic economic problems arising out of the war and to protect the interests of the common people.

Oriental Exclusion Statute

WHEREAS, (1) Our Allies in Asia, especially the gallant Chinese, are subjected to gross discrimination among the nations of the world by our undemocratic Oriental Exclusion Statutes, and recognizing that these statutes stand as a barrier to acceptance by our Oriental Allies of the sincerity of our war aims and equality among all men;

(2) These exclusion statutes place a heavy burden upon Chinese morale in its sixth year of relentless struggle against our common enemy, the forces of Japanese imperialism and slavery;

(3) This unfair discrimination, contained in the Oriental Exclusion Act, offers a legitimate base for powerful propaganda for the Japanese war lords which is designed to destroy friendly relations between us and our brave Chinese Ally;

(4) A continued existence of these archaic statutes with their racial inferiority implications runs the risk of future wars based primarily on race; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the CIO hereby reaffirms its position, heretofore taken before Congress, and urges Congress to enact legislation repealing the Oriental Exclusion Act as it affects our Allies and eliminating all racial bars to citizenship.

Smith-Connally Act

WHEREAS, (1) Congress, in passing the Smith-Connally bill over the courageous and farsighted veto of President Roosevelt, engaged in a vicious attack on labor's adherence to its voluntary no-strike pledge and its outstanding contribution to uninterrupted production;

(2) Such action on the part of Congress was not only an attack against labor's patriotism, but above all an at-

tack on national unity and hence upon the war effort, and was intended and in effect has served to encourage strikes and retard production;

(3) A similar attack upon labor and the war effort is imposed in the Hobbs bill designed to make possible the prosecution of labor unions for legitimate activities, which bill has been passed by the House and is pending in the Senate; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, (1) That the CIO calls upon Congress to repeal the Smith-Connally Act and upon the Senate to defeat the Hobbs Bill.

Political Action

(in part)

... The rank and file of labor throughout the nation is alive to the fact that the vital problems which they face are possible of solution only through their organized participation in the political life of the nation. The CIO Political Action Committee through its national office, its regional directors and regional committee, has set itself the task of giving stimulus, direction, guidance and organized expression to this growing political awareness of labor . . .

... Our primary task in the political field today is to weld the unity of all workers, farmers and other progressives behind candidates, regardless of party affiliation, who are committed to our policy of total victory and who fully support the measures necessary to achieve it and to lay the basis for a secure, peaceful, decent and abundant post-war world.

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